

2003 Transportation Summit Planning Team

Experts Comment on

Mobility Options (Urban and Rural)

MOBILITY OPTIONS

September 22, 2003

8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Secondary Center, Lake Michigan Conference Room, Lansing, MI

AGENDA

WELCOME

Facilitator: Kirk Steudle, MDOT Chief Deputy Director

Discussion Moderators:

Sharon Edgar, Administrator, MDOT Passenger Transportation Division

Clark Harder, Executive Director, Michigan Public Transit Association

Vicki Kovari, MOSES

EXPERTS SPEAKING ON THE ISSUES

Public Transportation in Michigan

Sharon Edgar, Administrator MDOT Passenger
Transportation Division

Clark Harder, Executive Director, MPTA

Transportation Accessibility

Kevin Wisselink, United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan,
Transportation Project Coordinator

Transit in Rural Michigan

Traverse City / Bay Area

Joe DeKoning, Executive Director,
Bay Area Transportation Authority

Alger County / Upper Peninsula

Rochelle Cotey, Executive Director,
Alger County Transit Agency (ALTRAN)

Mobility Issues in Urban Michigan

Carmine Palombo, Director of Transportation Programs,
Southeast Michigan Council of Governments

Urban Mobility: Voice of the Grass Roots

Vicki Kovari, Metropolitan Organizing Strategies Enabling
Strength (MOSES), Coordinator of Strategic Campaigns

Regional Transportation

Grand Rapids Region

Peter Varga, ITP - The Rapid Executive Director

Flint Region

Robert Foy, General Manager, Mass Transportation Authority

Intercity Bus Service

Greyhound Lines, Inc.

Randy Isaacs, State Government Affairs Representative,
Greyhound Lines, Inc.

Rail Passenger Recommendations

John Delora, Executive Director, Michigan
Association of Railroad Passengers

PLANNING ITEMS

Planning Team's Comments on the Issues

Drafting the Issues, Goals and Action Plan

Public Transportation in Michigan

Expert Speakers: **Sharon Edgar, Administrator, MDOT Passenger Transportation Division**
Clark Harder, Executive Director, MPTA

Public Transportation in Michigan

Includes the oversight of movement of both passenger and freight.

Our focus today on Mobility Options will center on:

- Local Public Transit Agencies

 - Urban

 - Small Urban

 - Rural

- Intercity bus (Greyhound, Indian trails)

- Intercity Rail 9Amtrak0

Other elements such as rail freight, marine and aeronautics will be covered in later sessions.

Historical Perspective

Prior to 1973, private companies provided essentially all mass transportation services.

Due to an aging fleet, the need for many capital improvements, and ridership decline, the cost of providing service became so prohibitive to the private sector that many systems were either in bankruptcy or unable to maintain a level of service to meet the needs of their area.

The necessity to provide public transit prompted local governments, in cooperation with the State and federal government, to purchase these operations from the private companies.

Today's Public Transit Services

In 1972, only 9 urban areas in the state had any local public transit services and these were barely surviving.

Today, every county in the state has some level of public transportation. The task for the future is to maintain a secure, stable funding to maintain these services while improving the level of service.

History of Michigan's Public Transit

The following shows how the Public Transportation system in Michigan evolved from Pre-1964 to 2003:

- **1964:** The Urban Mass Transportation Act passed by Congress. Establishes UMTA to coordinate capital assistance for transit. Paves way for public transit in Michigan.
- **1972:** First Transit Package in Michigan = ½ cent of the 9 cent state gas tax was set aside for the first time for public transportation.
- **1973:** Michigan State Highway Department becomes a total transportation agency, expanding its responsibilities to aeronautics, railroads, buses, water transportation, port development and non-motorized transportation.
- **1974:** First Michigan Dial-A-Ride system starts service in Holland on February 4th. Subsequently, over 60 new rural and small town public transit systems have been initiated statewide.
- **1974:** The state's Elderly and Handicapped program, now known as Specialized Services, was established in Mt. Pleasant. The program now provides funds to more than 100 agencies statewide.
- **1975:** Michigan's nonurban transit ridership exceeds one million passengers per year.
- **1977:** Michigan's first intermodal terminal opens in Kalamazoo, featuring transportation services of intercity bus, Amtrak, Kalamazoo Metro Transit, and taxicabs. Subsequently, over a dozen intermodal terminals have been opened statewide.
- **1978:** Second Michigan Transit Package enacted. Provides up to 10 percent of the 11 cent gas tax for public transportation programs. Also, a portion of the vehicle-related sales tax is made available for public transit for the first time.
- **1980:** Michigan's nonurban ridership exceeds four million passengers per year.
- **1982:** Third Michigan Transit Package enacted. Gas Tax increased to 13 cents with provision for automatic increase to a maximum of 15 cents. Sales tax formula also revised.
- **1984:** Michigan's gas tax automatically increases to the maximum of 15 cents.
- **1986:** Federal funds, matched by state funds, were received to construct 18 non-urban maintenance/operations facilities.
- **1986:** Michigan's specialized services ridership exceeds 500,000 passengers per year.

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**History of
Michigan
Public Transit,
*Continued***

- **1987:** Fourth Michigan Transit Package enacted. License and registration fees increased. Sales tax revised to allocate *not less than* 27.9 percent of 25% of the vehicle-related sales tax to public transit.
- **1988:** Additional federal funds received to construct nine more nonurban facilities in Michigan. Michigan Transit Insurance Pool implemented with 22 original members. First Rural Connector Program implemented in Mt. Pleasant to enhance integration of public transit and intercity services. Subsequently more than a half-dozen other projects implemented.
- **1989:** Joint efforts of MDOT, MPTA and other transportation interest groups begin, to deal with the continuing reduction in federal funds and the next state transportation package.
- **1991:** Total urban transit systems in state = 15, total nonurban systems = 56, total specialized services agencies funded = 121
- **1991:** First national Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) passed. Provides total funding of \$155 billion for 1992-97.
- **1994:** Michigan public transportation transports almost 100 million passengers a year to jobs, schools, medical services, social services and other basic needs.
- **1995:** Annual impact of Michigan's public transit expenditures is more than \$1 billion spread over all 83 counties in state. \$260 million in direct transit operating expenditures support more than 10,500 jobs directly, with an additional 14,000 jobs that are dependent upon the transit industry.
- **1997:** Gas Tax increases from 15 cents to 19 cents, though no increase is included for transit. Instead, transit receives a one-time funding increase of \$25 million of retained funds from CTF that the state has been withholding, resulting in spike in state percentage of support for public transportation to near the 50%/60% allowable limits under statute.
- **1998-2003:** Percentage of state support for transit decreases by approximately 3% each year; transit systems seek out additional local funding to offset losses in state revenue.

**How Public
Transportation
is Funded
Today**

Public Act 51 of 1951, as Amended, governs appropriations for most of the state's transportation agencies. Act 51 controls the process by funneling state-restricted transportation revenues into special funds and by then directing how those funds can be spent.

- Most state-generated revenue is derived from motor fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees.
- These sources generate an approximate \$2 billion for transportation annually.
- The Michigan Transportation Fund, or MTF, is the main collection and distribution fund for these restricted revenues.

ACT 51

Act 51 also provides a complex formula for the distribution of MTF funds to other state transportation funds, special program accounts, and to local governmental units.

The primary recipients of MTF funds are:

- The State Trunkline Fund (STF) for the construction and maintenance of state roads and bridges and for the administration of the Michigan Department of Transportation;
- Local road agencies (county road commissions, incorporated cities and villages);
- The Comprehensive Transportation Fund (CTF) which funds public transportation programs including bus capital and operating assistance to the state's 70+ public transit agencies.

**Local Bus
Operating**

The Formula:

State support for public transportation is made primarily through capital and operating assistance to the state's 70+ public transit agencies. Most of that assistance is made through the Local Bus Operating line item, which provides for state reimbursement of:

- Up to 50% of eligible operating expense for urban transit agencies, and
- Up to 60% of eligible operating expense for non-urban transit agencies.

Urban agencies are defined as serving a population of greater than 100,000 while non-urban (rural) agencies serve a population of less than or equal to 100,000.

Other Sources of Funding

Public transit agencies in Michigan also receive:

- Federal operating (non-urban) and capital (urban) funds
- CTF funds as match to federal grants
- CTF Specialized Services operating funds to transit agencies and other providers of services to seniors and persons with disabilities
- CTF and federal funds for Transportation to Work programs
- Two Marine Passenger ferry services also supported by State and operating and capital federal dollars
- Majority of transit systems are funded locally, either through mileage support or direct local government subsidies.
- All public transit agencies also rely upon fare box revenues and local service contracts to support their operations.

Other Public Transportation Programs Receiving State and Federal Support

In addition to the state support for local transit operations, there are a number of other programs that the state, through MDOT, supports. Included among these are Intercity Bus and Rail which we will also be reviewing today.

Intercity Bus

- Three private companies in Michigan provide regular intercity bus route service - with most service provided by either Greyhound Line and Indian Trails
- Over 200 Michigan communities are linked by intercity bus service
- Over 100 Michigan facilities at which intercity bus connects to local transit and/or passenger rail
- Significant segments of the population served by intercity bus include students, families, the disabled, and the elderly
- Financial support for intercity bus passenger services is provided to:
 - Avoid isolation of small communities
 - Support tourism and economic development
 - Provide a connection to the national bus system

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**Intercity Bus,
Continued**

MDOT uses CTF and federal Section 5311f funds to support the intercity bus system in three ways:

1. Operational Subsidies
 - Operational subsidies currently to Greyhound and Indian Trails on four routes identified by MDOT
 - Funds are provided to guarantee a pre-set rate per mile
2. Terminal Improvements
 - Improvements or construction of new terminals as need arises and funds are available
 - New terminal projects often part of a transit agency transfer facility
 - Terminal projects may benefit both intercity bus and rail
3. State purchase of highway motor coaches
 - About five buses purchased a year and leased to the carriers at minimal cost
 - Bus capital assistance helps ensure safe, modern vehicles serve intercity bus travelers throughout Michigan

On average, about \$8.0 million in state and federal funds expended per year to support Michigan's intercity bus system.

**Intercity
Passenger Rail**

Amtrak services twenty-three communities in Michigan with the following:

- *Pere Marquette*: Grand Rapids-Chicago with one daily round-trip
- *The International*: Toronto-Port Huron-Chicago with one daily round-trip
- Michigan Service: Pontiac-Detroit-Chicago with three daily round-trips
- The Detroit-Chicago portion of the Michigan Service is one of the original federally designated High Speed Corridors

**Intercity
Passenger Rail**

Amtrak offers dedicated thruway connection bus service from Detroit, Dearborn, Ann Arbor and Lansing to Toledo where you connect with trains to the east coast

- Indian Trails and Amtrak coordinate service between Flint and Battle Creek
- MDOT uses CTF and - when available - federal funds to support the intercity passenger rail system in two ways:

1. Direct operating subsidies (CTF)

- The *Pere Marquette* and *International* services are operated by Amtrak at MDOT's request
- CTF funding supports operating losses on these routes

2. Capital Improvements (CTF and federal)

Capital improvements are categorized into the following components:

- Track infrastructure
- Train control
- Communication systems
- Stations equipment
- Grade crossing
- Track, train control and communication systems, and grade crossing work has been geared towards implementation of high speed operations on the Detroit-Chicago corridor
- Equipment and stations improvements are for system-wide benefits

For the past several years the intercity passenger rail service budget has been approximately \$8.0 million CTF and \$3.0 million federal

Transportation Accessibility

Expert Speaker: **Kevin Wisselink, United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan, Transportation Project Coordinator**

Transportation Project Basics

- Funded through a grant administered by the Michigan Development Disability Council
 - *Mission:*
To increase the voice of people with disabilities in transportation policy decisions.
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Importance of Public Transportation

- Public transportation is the primary mode of transportation for many in Michigan, including many people with disabilities
 - The availability of accessible transportation is consistently listed among the top barriers to independence by people with disabilities
 - Access to transportation is essential for so much of what our communities have to offer: employment, recreation, social interaction, etc.
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Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

- The ADA was signed into law into 1990 after years of advocacy by the disability rights movement
 - Basic requirement: people with disabilities must have the same access to public transportation service as the general population
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ADA Guidelines for Bus Lines

- All new line-haul buses must be lift-equipped
 - Complementary paratransit service (ex. Spectran) must be available to anyone who lives within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of a transit line but cannot access the service because of physical or mental disability
-

ADA and other Modes of Transportation

- All other forms of transit, including dial-a-rides and door-to-door service, must also be accessible; this usually means having vehicles with lifts available
- Not all vehicles have to be accessible, but accessible service must be available on request
- The ADA also has regulations covering intercity rail and bus service (ex. Amtrak and Greyhound)

Act 51 and Accessibility

- Act 51 requires that all transit agencies submit an accessibility plan to MDOT each year
 - This plan must be reviewed by a Local Advisory Council (LAC)
 - At least 50% of the people on the Local Advisory Council must represent people with disabilities and seniors
-

Access to Transportation Services

- The greatest transportation issue facing people with disabilities is the lack of availability of transit service
 - About 1/3 of Michigan's counties do not have countywide transit service
 - Even among counties with countywide service, it can be difficult to get a ride to the outlying areas
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Availability of Transit Service

- Hours and days of operation are also an issue – people are often cut off from transportation after 5 PM
 - Availability of buses can also be a problem, especially around peak transportation times
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Physical Accessibility Issues

- Most systems in Michigan have good physical accessibility, including lift equipped buses
 - However, there can still be accessibility problems, such as drivers who do not know how to operate the equipment or equipment that is improperly maintained
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Other Physical Accessibility Issues

- Availability of bus information in alternative formats
 - Accessible pedestrian paths to and from the bus stops
 - Drivers calling out stops and major intersections
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**Paratransit
Service Quality**

- Paratransit door-to-door service is especially challenging to deliver
 - As a result, many paratransit riders are forced to deal with such things as:
 - Spending 2 hours on the bus to reach their in-town destinations
 - Paratransit buses that are 1 hour late / early
 - Difficulties in scheduling rides
-

**Attitudinal
Barriers**

- There are some transit agency staff who do not understand disability issues
 - Most transit systems have staff “Sensitivity Training” in place to help staff work with people with disabilities
 - Most transit system employees are very polite and helpful; however, such issues as rude drivers and schedulers continue to be problems
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Q & A

Q: Lifts don’t always work and now with the new definition of accessibility. Can we now provide ramps, or the kneeling bus, or other new technology that provides platforms so we are creating more of a level entrance? Or is the definition still focusing on lifts?

A: No, options are available. Ramps are good. New ideas include a low floor bus.

Q: On Spectran services, door to door, do you have annual ridership statistics? And, in terms of regular routes, what is the percentage of people who use them?

A: That’s various from system to system. On statewide level, however, ridership is increasing by approximately 25%.

Q: Is there any criteria or guidelines about making bus stops accessible. Not just the sidewalk. There are stops that are inaccessible to those who are blind or in a wheel chair. In the winter time, I have seen businesses that virtually block bus stops with large piles of snow. Is there any overarching authority that has jurisdiction over this? And is there any effort to improve hardware that locks a wheel chair in place. This takes the driver time to lock them in, plus there is the matter of dignity concerning the person who has to sit there while this locking process is done? And, a third question is, on a county-wide basis, who determines who is on the Board? Is there a template or some criteria?

A: I do know that one member of the Board must be in area of the area representing aging seniors and disability. As for the wheelchair locking mechanisms, yes, this is an issue. I just heard that in Flint they have a new system that clips in the wheel chairs.

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In Europe, they don't even use clips and the person simply hangs on because they find it safer. Finally, regarding bus stop accessibility, unless a specific city has it in place, there is no particular state legislation or overarching "this is what you have to do to maintain accessible bus stops" rule.

- Q: From a policy standpoint, for a Detroit system for example, they might be lucky to get buses that run on the road not to speak of being equipped with lifts; and there are funding issues, that make it difficult to meet ADA requirements. We say we have buses 'theoretically' equipped; but in reality, often they are not. We are ripe for law suits. What happens when can't meet these guidelines? When it comes to money, what happens?
- A: There have been a number of law suits, but challenges have been unsuccessful. Where funds aren't available, I don't know the answer. Transit agency can apply for a waiver of requirements but I don't know if they can be successful because there is no funding.
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Transit in Rural Michigan: Traverse City / Bay Area

Expert Speakers: Joe DeKoning, Executive Director, Bay Area Transportation Authority

Transit in the Traverse City Area

We need to get as regional as we can in order to get local bus routes out of schedules.

How do people access system? Until 2 yrs ago it was door to door.

They got a grant and tried to get agencies and others involved.

Now they are regional.

We have real time dispatching.

In doing this, we recognized the services available are centrally located. Most of them, in Traverse City.

This is a long distance for most.

Proposal A worked, people are staying home and are not moving into town. So they need access to transportation to make this continue to work.

- We have transportation to casinos.
- We also recognized that people who need public transportation need it beyond 5 p.m.
- We also provide transportation until midnight.
- Also, the efforts on line haul (fixed route) are changing how we do business.

3 years ago, we were doing 320,000 per year. Now, it is 420,000 trips per year.

Now 25% are accessed through the line haul. So they can access the system without a phone call.

Passed mileage recently and promised that we would start village connector service. We will have service from the village to Traverse City. They will provide schedules to show when busses leave. Then, they will have door service to the busses. Finally, people will have access to the system without a phone call.

Transit in Rural Michigan: Alger County / Upper Peninsula

Expert Speaker: Rochelle Cotey, Executive Director, Alger County Transit Agency, (ALTRAN)

Funding is the Major Problem

The real problem we deal with is that we are under-funded.
We need more funds. For example, capital.

The state had an opportunity in '97 and didn't do it. Today, 8 out of 14 busses need to be replaced. They have 500,000 on a bus; this makes it difficult to serve people where we have 300 inches of snow!

We are trying to survive.

I speak on behalf of the whole Upper Peninsula.

- We get students who need to go to school.
- We go into Marquette 5 times a day. We bring people to the Northern University in Marquette from as far away as 45 miles.
- We bring people into Marquette General Hospital for dialysis treatment.

But even this doesn't meet all the needs.

- There's also job training and employment. There are a lot of people who live in Marquette and need to work in Munising.

Again, it gets down to money and capital. One national policy is non-emergency medical service. There is a lot of money in this area.

- This is where people are calling ambulances to get to medical treatment. It would be amazing how many people we could transport with that kind of money.
- Need to look at this, and we need to get cooperation from FIA and others.
- These people could help more if we could get some of the transportation dollars to help where we do door to door service.

Look at other counties in the Upper Peninsula. Some have to travel 150 miles to get to a medical center. We need to be able to spend some money to get people where they need to go.

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- We coordinate maintenance.
- We utilize the sheriff's department to help us. We transport auto parts. If someone needs a car fixed, they hire us to bring the parts.
- We carry papers back and forth. We get all kinds of requests to assist.

Transportation is a barrier in many ways. I serve on a youth board and these youth want to see movies. So, we provide services to transport them to the movies. We need to bring back up the 60% that is stated in legislation for rural transport. We have 30% taxable land, but how much more can you tax people when they are already paying at the pump?

Q & A

Q: Traverse City is known as a retirement area. Boomers and senior mobility is an increasing issue. What percentage of your customers are seniors, and have you made any plans for accommodating more as population continues to age?

A: Yes, they get funding. 47% are riders today and we expect that to stay the same or increase a little. The current plans we have include the area of aging, and we are working on that problem on pre and post trips. Our drivers are just 'drivers' and we don't help people "get ready for or get over" the trip. We see that as the problem. The 'double stops' (e.g., where prescriptions are required following the doctor visit). We are working on that now.

Q: You seem to have seen increases in ridership. Have you seen any reduction in auto traffic?

A: No reduction in Traverse City in auto traffic. We are not the solution; we are part of the solution. It used to be busy only in the summer but now it is busy year-round. We need good roads and good bridges. Buses are built on truck chassis, so we need good roads to ride on.

Q: You mentioned that your agency was created under PA 196. How did you do this?

A: This leg is one of 4 or 5 acts that transit agencies can form under. They looked at all of them and felt it was the best for us, but there are others (e.g., Act 7).

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Q & A,
Continued

Q: You were able to do this without going to the legislation?

A: The two counties got together and did it. Cities and townships were original, and they withdrew and the county took it over.

Q: Isn't another problem that a lot of people as they get older have not gotten used to public transportation, and they don't know how to read schedules?

A: Yes, this is a problem in the United States. It's not taught in our schools. So we have to train. We are developing a buddy system so people can call someone and say, "I don't know how to do this. Can you help me?"

Q: In terms of Proposal A working (keeping people in their homes) was this predicted?

A: Don't know if it was predicted or not. Actuarially speaking, this is most likely going to be women. No, I don't think this was thought of at the time the legislation was talked about or passed.

Mobility Issues in Urban Michigan

Expert Speaker: **Carmine Palombo, Director of Transportation Programs, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)**

Mobility Issues in Southeast Michigan

- 4.0 Million Vehicles
 - 3.4 Million Licensed Drivers
 - 23, 000 Miles
 - 800 Congested Miles
 - Poor Pavement Conditions
 - Of 3, 560 Bridges, 1, 387 of them are deficient
 - 27.5 Million Vehicles
 - 175,000 Traffic Crashes
 - Public Transit
 - Non-motorized
 - Freight
-

Southeast Michigan

Ambassador bridge is the busiest crossing between the US and Canada. It equals about one 18-wheeler every 7 seconds! All this traffic means lots of crashes-175,000 last year.

One crash every 3 minutes in the Detroit area.

We have 7 providers:

1. Detroit Transportation
2. Detroit People Mover
3. Blue Water
4. Ann Arbor
5. Livingston County
6. Lake Area Transit
7. Monroe County

- All these provide 60 million trips per year. Even with this number, a lot more is needed.
- We have 800miles of bike pathways and thousand of miles of walk pathways.
- Freight includes 959 miles of rails. 6 marine ports.
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In year 2000, we traveled 47 billion miles.

We expect by 2030, 54 billion miles on our system.

Growth

Things aren't staying the same. It will get more complex.
Southeast Michigan is home to 4.9 million people.
By 2030 we expect 5.4 million. And the growth will be in suburban areas.

HOUSING:

- Housing will increase more because household size will decrease. Aging population is growing very fast. Households without children are growing which leads to more households.

JOBS:

- We also project job changes in the region. The growth in job changes is more in the urban course because this is where the infrastructure is in place.

LAND USE:

- If more land is projected to be developed and handle this growth, then need to think about land use.

Take all this into account when think of mobility. If had the resources we would like to repair all bridges and roads, and address high crash areas, build more rail and trails, improve regional transit systems and a conservative estimate to do this is \$70 billion over next 30 years.

2030 Regional Plan

The most we expect is 40 billion. So how to deal with all this? Can't fix everything and so need to decide what we will fix and a mix of fixes. We are working on a 2030 Regional Plan.

Congestion Management

There is no silver bullet or one solution.
Have lots of tools and need to use them if we hope to address them at all.

Started by developing a congestion management plan. If we do nothing and traffic continues to increase it will continue to get worse.

Three 3 categories of ideas: strategies to decrease the number of vehicles

1. Transportation Demand Management
 2. Transportation System Management
 3. Provide For More Pavement Or Widening
-

Demand Management

How to decrease demand?

- Alternative commute
- Share rides
- Work flexible hours
- Telecommute

This can also help during periods of construction if not comfortable doing it all the time.

Regional Busses Adopted a plan 2 years ago for a 4-Tier system regarding busses with regional links of busses.

Provide for paratransit more.

Development of Detroit area regional authority is the right direction. Mandate is to coordinate services and have implementation authority so they can make plans a reality. For example, at SEMCOG we are looking how to connect Detroit and Ann Arbor.

Transportation to Work

- Transportation services for low income workers.
 - It operates 13 vans 7 days a week 13 hours per day.
 - 10,000 people served last year.
-

Traffic Signal Summit

- Improve operations on our streets
 - Working with region on developing traffic signal work.
 - All these signals operating independently.
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ITS

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) can help us signalize the signals, freight (tolls collected electronically and knowing what is in the vehicle ahead of the time they get to the toll booth).

One success in Southeast Michigan is the Courtesy Patrol. Twelve vans helped 27,-000 stranded vans by bringing them gas, etc. and this resulted in fewer backups and traffic flowed better.

**Exploring
Alternatives****1. Road Expansion**

Still need this in some areas and need to do it strategically. Don't have enough money to widen everything. Look at strategy to deal with urban mobility rather than just widen the roads. Need to do all of these things in combination in order to successfully deal with this.

2. Urban Congestion

This is a complicated issue and it is even more complicated because the options we give we don't give them more than one option and they aren't equal options. There is no one thing that will take care of our problems.

Need to look at a range of options and different options for different parts of the population that they really consider options, not just what we believe are options. Otherwise, we will not begin to solve the problems.

The solution is to get the tool chest out and use the tools and address each problem as an opportunity to examine the situation.

Urban Mobility: Voice of the Grass Roots

Expert Speaker: **Vicki Kovari, Metropolitan Organizing Strategies Enabling Strength (MOSES)**

MOSES

MOSES stands for Metropolitan Organizing Strategies Enabling Strength. It is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that teaches lay and clerical leaders how to organize people and/or raise money in order to influence public policy. –*Christian Science Monitor*, from the October 16, 2002 edition.

MOSES is represented by:

- 80 Member Congregations; U of M; UDM
 - 60 New Homes in Detroit
 - Safe Zones
 - After School Programs
 - Mass Transit and Fix It First
 - Regional Equity & Interracial Cooperation
-

MOSES

MOSES Vision Statement

We want a world class regional mass transit system in Southeast Michigan that includes:

- Coordinated rapid transit linking 5 counties
 - Coordinated bus systems with seamless connections and improved service
 - Coordinated community transit for elderly and handicapped
 - High speed inter city rail links to Chicago and Toledo
-

Goal and Objectives

Transportation Options for all our citizens

Obtain regional, state and federal funding to implement the vision:

- Get DARTA Board to approve vision, plan
 - Get voters in 5 counties to approve new funding measure in 2005.
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Today's Situation

DARTA Board formed in May 2003

- New services plan by end of 2004
- Submit to Governor and Legislature by March 2005, including enabling legislation for funding
- Big 4 have veto power
- Macomb Reps go to Attorney General and AFSCME sues-- to stop DARTA

Where are we today:

DARTA Board to do what was done in Traverse Bay Area, and we aren't where they are nor in Flint.

We do have a DARTA organization and have to come up with plans by 2004. Submit to Legislature by 2005.

The 3 main counties and Detroit city have veto power, so we have to reach consensus. So there is a challenge to work cooperatively.

Macomb County went to Attorney General to say it was not formed legally, but the courts ruled that it was. Now, the unions are trying to sue to stop DARTA. A judge will rule on this in early November.

So, how did we get to this point?

How Did We Get Here?

- 1951 P.A. 51 limits gas taxes to 10% for public transit
- 1956 streetcar service ends after 64 years
- 1983 Commuter rail service ends after 52 years
- In 1958, 1969, 1976, 1979, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1996 and 2001 studies and plans were released calling for a regional rapid transit system in Metro Detroit
- Plans never realized because the political leadership could not agree on funding
- No vote of the people has been taken on this since 1929
 - All studies called for a Regional Transit System in Metro Detroit.
 - No money for any of the plans and no one has asked the people.
 - In 1929 a vote approved a subway system for Detroit, but the stock market crashed.

So, 70 years and no system.

No organized grass roots support that would hold over time.

**Where Do We
Go From
Here?**

The role of organized grass roots efforts

**Listening to
the People**

- 1-1s in congregations
- 100 congregations in 100 days
 - Thousands interviewed during listening campaigns; stories about access to jobs, health care, education
 - Lack of coordination city to suburb, suburb to suburb
- Public Meetings
 - Meetings of 1,000 (2001) and 5,000 people (2002)
- Surveys
 - By U of M students April 2003

The way we got there was one-on-one in congregations.

Each congregation asked, “What is on your mind?”

1. Visited 100 congregations in 100 days!
We brought the SEMCOG Regional Transportation Plan with us, and in the summer of 2001 talked to people about it and showed them pictures of what had been accomplished in other cities.
2. We asked what they thought.
We had a meeting of 1000 people devoted to the issue of public transit. This happened 3 weeks after 9/11 and 3000 people showed up.
3. On September 29, 2002, we had 5000 people and both governor candidates present.
4. And finally, in April 2003, we had students from U of M talk to Kiwanis clubs, PTAs and other types of clubs. We did this because they said ‘we had only talked with congregations who are do-gooders.’ These were political science students from the University of Michigan. In Oakland County, they went to the Senior Center, PTA, 7 Oakland elementary schools. In Wayne County, they went to Senior Centers. Talked to 252 people from these organizations. We couldn’t get on the agendas for many of these organizations. But they actually attended the meetings and then asked if could come next month to talk with them.

**University of
Michigan
DARTA
Project**

University of Michigan Political Science Students Christina Beaty, Jennifer Curry, Joanna Ford, under the direction of Dr. Greg Markus

Three Areas and Groups Targeted:

- Oakland County
 - Wayne County
 - Macomb County
-

Results

Sample data consists of 252 residents from target areas

Survey Questions:

1. Are you currently a public transportation user?
 - 5% Yes
 - 95% No
 2. Would you use public transportation if it was more efficient?
 - 81% Yes
 - 17% No
 - 2% Maybe
 3. If DARTA were placed on the ballot, would it be motivation to vote?
 - 93% = YES (234 people)
 - 7 % = NO (18 people)
 4. IF DARTA legislation is passed, what form of funding would you prefer? - Sales or Gas Tax, Small % said Property Tax
 5. What form of public transportation system would you be most in favor of? - Safe, Different (Rail), Comprehensive, Coordinated
-

Findings

Findings

- Strong sense of moral obligation attached to public transit
- Strong desire for choice (rail, airport)

Not willing to pay if...

- Just busses
- Just property tax

**Findings,
Continued**

Willingness to pay if ...

- Safe
- Different (rail)
- Comprehensive, coordinated
- Gas, sales or other tax

Next Steps

- Overcoming disillusionment
- Plan and Voter referendum
- Elections in 2004

What does this suggest? That there is a strong sense of obligation for transit and that they are willing to pay if it is safe, coordinated, comprehensive and different. So, we feel that, in terms of making mobility an option it is to overcome disillusionment. We will have to put it on the ballot; and likely, that will be through voter referendum. We need to really look at the public in 2004 to see who the decision makers will be.

Q & A

Q: In terms of your surveys and studies and mobility options, can you speak to air, in terms of people getting from Grand Rapids to the Upper Peninsula or to Traverse City?

A: We have 30 airports in Southeastern Michigan and most are private air carriers. They are general use airports and privately owned. We are losing one per year. It is having an impact on options on how to move freight primarily. And this is huge. Lot of freight goes by truck and working with MDOT to do more with rail. But the problem with these airports leaving (and developers love this) it is limiting our freight options. So the passenger services are primarily located in Wayne and Oakland and Flint but in terms of a lot of activity in this area. Citizens are generally looking for these air options to go away because of the noise. So, we're not likely to get more.

A: In the MOSES surveys, people said they wanted more options to get to Chicago. One of the reasons we put down rail links to Chicago was to have an alternative to air. A high speed intercity rail link would make it more convenient. They want alternatives to air. And access to links to Chicago and Toledo.

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Q: In one of the early slides, you said “how to get there” but it showed everything that was cut-out. Mass transit concept is that there are masses of people going from somewhere to somewhere. In late 70s, went east to west. In late 60s had total immigration from cities (city of Detroit). DARTA is studying this problem. Traditionally mass transit has not worked unless it was within 2 blocks of home. Glad to hear people are interested in mass transit. But, you’re right. The question is, what does that look like? What specific transit are we talking about? And are we willing to pay for it? Maybe with your group there will be a comprehensive look at it. Why do you think it will work now?

A: One of the impediments is the issue of density. In Southeast Michigan, we are not dense enough. This works against public transit. We are the fifth most populous in the U.S. We are the only one, plus Miami, that do not have rapid transit. We feel that the issue of density is not enough of an issue, given the other parts of the country, where they are more spread out. We feel it will work here.

Q: In the other cities that have world class mass transit systems, how are they paid for? My guess is that it is not from the state.

A: The tax of choice in most other major metro areas is a local sales tax. In Michigan we are prohibited by the constitution to have this. It is an option that every survey shows as the preferred way; however, legislature doesn’t want to open up a Pandora’s box to deal with this. This is the preferred method.

Back to the other question: Part of what we try to do is recognize that we need mass transit, but it is not the same type of service everywhere. This leads to trouble. We need 4 levels: paratransit service; more line haul in some areas. We have a spread out region with multiple urban centers and we have no way to get between them now, so we need a bus or express or a train or something. There are some corridors that are more dense and ready for light rail or some higher form of service. We must tailor the service to the area. There is not one solution for all.

Regional Transportation (Grand Rapids Region)

Expert Speaker: **Peter Varga, ITP – The Rapid Director**

How do you create a plan and new authority to move into new transportation service delivery?

We had the transportation plan for Grand Rapids valley and it was adopted by us and the MPO. This was the planning for the future and most thought it would be a shelf document.

In our case this is not the truth. Something occurred that transformed this document to reality. It was passed in 1998.

Two Initial Failures:

- 1) Going to Kent County Board of Commissions
- 2) Create a Regional System

Faith in motion (like MOSES) which is various congregations of churches (all faiths) who got together to say, in one voice, that there is a social justice issue here. With this implementation, came a greater consciousness:

- Seniors and others (Chamber, Economic Development Agency For Metro Region) came together.
- A lunch meeting was held for 6 mayors, and these six mayors agreed on a plan to put before the public. This was a plan to create mobility improvements in the region.
- Prior to this, our system stopped at 6 p.m. There was no Saturday or Sunday service.
- It all came as a result of this study. It was put to the vote and passed by 69%. It went from Act 7 to Act 69 authority.
- This was created on new bases and was originally viewed as a failing agency.
- Have to think this way when look at these issues. It is not easy. There are a lot of different partners, and they have a vested stake in this.

Managing this partnership is a challenge.

We have to set aside parochial interests and think regionally.

It is challenging. It is political entities. There is a board of agencies and you have to leave your organization behind, but it is not possible.

City Commissioners often think about themselves. So be conscious of it. You have to change your mindset of what “regional transit” means. And always go back to the plan.

We are now conducting a regional study for future light rail or bus or rapid transit. We do the study when there is an issue.

If we want to create “regional mobility,” we have to think of terms of partnerships, in a broad based way, and how to structure it within the law and then stick to the plan. Out of partnerships come additional partnerships. Like Grand Valley State University, for which we now transport 2000 students between counties. And this ridership has been growing each year.

Our service when first created had 4 million riders and now we have 5.8 million rides. This is change! Don’t overlook the short lunch meeting of mayors that gets the ball rolling!

Regional Transportation (Flint Region)

Expert Speaker: **Robert Foy, General Manager, Mass Transportation Authority**

Regional Transportation

Importance and need for mass transit. And the changing nature of public transit and the needs in community. Also transportation in metro areas. There is a big transition. Unless part of this change-- think of it as going to corner to get a bus.

The Situation in Flint

Affordable transportation to and from the surrounding counties is a critical issue in the greater Flint area.

Presently unemployment in the City of Flint approaches 19%.
Genesee County unemployment is over 11%.

Jobs that provide a livable wage with fringe benefits are located primarily in the suburban areas of the county and in the surrounding counties such as Oakland County and Livingston County.

Community Need

Background of Community Need

- Work trips
- Medical trips
- Education trips
- Support for Family Independence Agency/
Michigan Works! Agency
- Federal Job Corp Program

The need to move between regions is extremely important. We in Genesee are going through a transition. Had 90,000 auto-related jobs once and now have only 15,000. We are moving to service and retail related jobs and are more of a bedroom community to Southeast Michigan. The quality of life is very appealing coming from Southeast Michigan.

There is a growing need for regional transportation. General Motors has consolidated their effort and moved their head quarters of Buick, and others. Much of the effort from the proving ground is moving back to Genesee county.

Continued on next page

So people living in these areas have kids with relationships and their jobs are changing but they don't want to move. Particularly when moving from low cost area to high cost area. The dollar doesn't go as far in Detroit as it does in Genesee county. So, work- related trips are important.

Also deal with medical trips. A medical facility has moved and many go there. So there is a closer relationship. Those who live at the Genesee living facility.

As we transition into charter schools. They are not neighborhood schools, they are regional schools. We have kids coming 30to 35 miles to come to the school. So we have to address this need.

Many of the individuals who are electing to go to college in Flint and the increased cost of education are driving them into areas where there are lower costs, like at Mott Community College, and there are lots of more kids because of costs of education. They can get a quality education in this way.

The Family Independence Agency and Michigan Works! agencies are finding that when students come out of the schools that the jobs are not in their area. So they have to transport them to the jobs.

Federal Job Corp Program is a federal / national site. There are 350 people there now. Some come from California to here. Some from Detroit. 30 to 40% of student population at the school is from Detroit. So they have a need for regional transportation since they are a Regional Job Corp Center.

**Response to
Community
Need**

Regional Transportation System

- Genesee County
- Oakland County
- Livingston County
- Saginaw County
- Lapeer County
- Northern Washtenaw County
-

Coordination of Transportation Service Schedules

- SMART
- LETS
- STARS
- MTA

**Response to
Community
Need,
*Continued***

Regional transportation is something we haven't thought about. What have we done?

We have created regional transportation and interconnect with others:

- Most of this is job related.
- We have some reverse commute regarding medical treatments and those who work in the field.
- Most are automobile job related. They support General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler.
- In Lapeer County the effort is agriculture. They have canning factories and have large employment in the summer and then go down for the rest of the year.
- In Saginaw County this is job-related. Some in retail sales and medical, but primarily job related.
- In Oakland County, we start at 5 a.m. and go every hour until 1 a.m. the next morning. Have over 1000 trips each day.

We have responded.

17 busses provide regional transportation between these locations.

Genesee County is becoming a sister county to Southeastern Michigan. We are much more dependent than before.

The coordination that is going on at the Bishop International Airport is significant. The net effect is that public transit is another way that economic development is growing stronger with Southeastern Michigan. Our planning has to interface with them.

What we have is coordination of services between services:

SMART to Great Lakes Crossing and can transfer to a Smart Bus and then can go throughout the Detroit areas. This goes the other way as well. Similar relationships with LETS and STARTS and MTA.

Funding

Funding of Service

Initial Support

State of Michigan Regional Transportation Program

Local Match

Fare Box Revenue

Continued on next page

Current Support

Federal Job Access/Reverse Commute Program

State of Michigan Match

Local Contribution

Fare Box Revenue

- Funding started as part of State of Michigan Regional Transportation Program.
- They provided 75% of funding, then 50% and then 25% and then on your own.
- We used local match at the beginning. Currently this effort is continuing through the federal job act and this program provides money on an annual basis.
- We also have local contribution to be able to do match and then the fare box revenue.

What will future hold?

We are doing this on a year to year basis. The federal job access program helps. We are looking at a mileage in the county to move away from federal funding. If the Federal programs continue, then we will continue to ask. But with a mileage, we will not lose the gains made.

- Relocation of jobs to Southeast Michigan
We have upgraded the quality of equipment because we now have more who ride. The people riding in this region are not just those who are coming off welfare programs. There are more jobs in Southeast Michigan. Jobs are now available. Unemployment is down. We look for job opportunities.
- Schools
Charter schools are using this and it is important to them.
- Traffic congestion
Since economy is down, so is the congestion. The congestion on I-75 is down some. But unless we are willing to have limited access lanes, the buses cannot go faster than the cars. We need to look at creating the diamond lanes that allow busses to move at rapid rate. We need to seriously look at this.
- Economic impact
Go to Southeastern Michigan to work and it brings the money back to Genesee to live. Even though we have lost jobs; the people continue to live there, so it is okay.

**Impact on
Community****Ridership**

- Relocation of Jobs
- New Job Opportunities
- Charter School
- FIA/Michigan Works!

Traffic Congestion

Economic Impact

Strengthens Regional Partnership

Intelligent Transportation Systems Development

Current Issues

- Aging Population
- Increase in Passengers with Disabilities
- Movement of Population from City to Townships
- Safety Issues
- Cost of Service
- School Transportation
- Charter Schools
- School Districts Facing Financial Challenges
- Increased Number of Passengers with Critical Medical Conditions
- Need for Equipment Improvements
- Liability Issues
- FIA and Michigan Works! Agencies Desire more Personalized Transportation
- 24 Hour Services for Job Related Needs
- Rising Health Care Costs

Strengthen regional partnerships.

We feel more closely aligned with SE MI than before. Not much going on in our county that we don't have to tie ourselves to other counties.

We have to do Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) together. As people move from Genesee county to other counties then Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) is extremely important.

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Here are the issues that need to be addressed in a plan:

- Aging population (who are using public transit more and more now)
- Increase passengers with disability
- Moving of population from cities to townships (townships don't have sidewalks) and they have to be dropped off on the side of the road where there are snow banks. There are areas of this state where people walk down the middle of a highway because there is no sidewalk.
- School transportation (Most charter schools don't have public transportation, so we have to meet this need to help kids.)
- Increase number of passengers with medical critical conditions (Today we carry several hundred people per day who are coming off dialysis machines. When they arrive, they are in a critical state. But they can't afford ambulances. The affect is we need to deal with this.)

As we carry more of above the liability is very serious. We have special responsibility; and if they are injured, we have to show that we can handle the situation. Also, we are dealing with more people who are having trouble getting and keeping a job, so they need more personalized services. We need 24 hour services to meet the current rising health care costs.

Q & A

Q: I hadn't thought of the impact of charter schools. Can you talk about the impact of transporting school age children?

A: We have been involved with transporting students for 10 years. As the district was downsizing they had strong union opposition to downsizing; and, the net effect was that they brought transportation back so the service workers could be brought back. After 2 years, they may have public transportation do this work. We can do this at about 40% of their costs. From the standpoint of charter schools, for profit, they want parents to bring them. But many are special people and their incomes are limited and they are now being forced into having transportation. We thought we would have 200 trips a day and now are at 1200. This will grow significantly. In Grand Rapids, we transport 2800 for Grand Rapids public transportation. We now have 11 special buses on our system for students, and this number will grow.

Greyhound Lines, Inc.

Expert Speaker: **Randy Isaacs, State Government Affairs Rep, Greyhound Lines, Inc.**

Overview

- Greyhound Lines, Inc. is the largest North American provider of intercity bus transportation
- Serving more than 3,600 destinations with 19,000 daily schedules in the US & Canada and connections to all major bus lines in Mexico
- Greyhound – and its nationwide network of interline partners – is the glue that binds rural & small towns and America’s urban centers: America’s Transit System
- Our primary product is scheduled intercity bus service, but we also offer charter, package express, and food services
- In addition to our primary products, we have begun to introduce other services:
 - Greyhound QuickLink® Commuter Service (Sacramento-San Francisco; Mt. Laurel, NJ-NYC (Wall Street))
 - Greyhound FlightLink® Airport Service (20 airports nationwide)
 - Amtrak Throughway Service (to more than 90 non-rail communities nationwide)
 - Cruise Lines Meet ‘n’ Greet Services (on both coasts)
 - Lucky Streak® Casino Service
 - ITS (Intelligent Transportation Systems) – Database Management (for more than 130 companies)
 - Telephone Information Center Mgmt. (for more than 130 companies)

We have largest fare box recover ratio. If the Federal and states governments had to provide support to replace Greyhound, it would amount to about \$1 billion.

Customers

- Over 23 million people choose Greyhound every year
- Almost 32% of passengers make over \$35,000 per year
- Almost half have used an airline in the last year
- One-third have a college degree and are better educated than the U.S. population as a whole
- Many own an automobile sufficiently reliable for a trip of a similar distance, but take the bus because it is safer and cheaper
- Our average ticket price is \$42

Safety

- Motor coaches are the safest mode of transportation in America
- From 1987 to 1996, U.S. interstate motor coach travel had an average of 4.3 passenger fatalities per year
- During this same period, an average of 44,080 persons were killed per year in motor vehicle crashes of all types on U.S. highways
- Greyhound has an outstanding safety record with an accident rate one-fifth that of all commercial vehicles in the US

Sources: National Safety Council Accident Facts – Editions 1989 – 1998 and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) safety and compliance audit in 2000.

Environmental

- Intercity coaches are one of the most environmentally friendly forms of transportation in America
- A single Greyhound bus takes about 16 cars off the road, and achieves 162 passenger miles per gallon of fuel
- A single car emits almost 115 times more carbon monoxide than a new motor coach per passenger mile
- That same car emits over 181 times more hydrocarbons, which cause ozone and air toxins, than a single motor coach

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- With respect to nitrogen oxides (which cause ozone and acid rain), a car is more than two times worse than a motor coach and almost four times worse with respect to carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas

Sources: EPA's National Vehicle and Fuel Emissions Laboratory and Detroit Diesel test information for more than 700 of Greyhound's newest engines.

Intermodalism

- The future of passenger transportation is the seamless connection of services between intercity air, bus, rail and local/regional modes
 - Seamless connections require a physical facility & information that brings all the modes and their passengers together in one place
 - Greyhound is a tenant in more than 100 rural, small urban and urban intermodals centers, with planning & development for over 100 more
 - Greyhound's future (& good regional transportation) depends on improved connectivity with other modes in all communities; we are committed to -- and have become a leader in -- intermodalism in America
-

Partnerships

- Traditional public sector thinking about Greyhound needs to change: we are a partner, not a vendor
- We want to raise awareness of the unique role we can play in the provision of public transportation services
- We can apply our capital & know how to transportation problems: a new ethical partnership offering safe, dependable service, implemented quickly and provided with trained/dedicated union labor
- Greyhound has developed partnerships in a growing number of communities & tailored intermodal solutions to the needs of each, and we'd like to do more
- Greyhound partners with local, regional and national public transportation providers every day, with features ranging from:
 - Simple curbside passenger connections to transfers with local & regional bus & rail services in intermodal facilities

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- Standard leases & standard commission agent agreements to joint use & development agreements
 - Privately funded commuter service to unique express bus partnerships, and
 - Intermodal facility & ITS partnerships to joint sales & ticketing agreements
-

- Recommendations**
- Greater emphasis should be placed on seamless connections between air, rail, local public transportation and scheduled intercity bus service.
 - Access to airports throughout Michigan by intercity bus and local public transit services should be required if an airport receives federal or state funds.
 - Express & commuter service can be a low-cost and energy efficient service provided by intercity bus to improve air quality and traffic congestion.
 - Service and geographic boundaries established by state and federal law for local public transit and intercity bus service must remain clear and be enforced by the State of Michigan.
 - Like all other forms of public transportation, intercity bus service is facing a financial crisis. Intercity bus service in MI has been reduced and eliminated, and more cuts are planned. Flexibility in the MDOT intercity bus programs must occur if the state wants to retain these important services.
 - If Michigan is serious about its support for intercity bus services, MDOT should revise its TEA-21 reauthorization objectives by removing the call for the elimination of the FTA 5311(f) program.
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Rail Passenger Recommendations

Expert Speaker: **John Delora, Executive Director, Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers (MARP)**

Rail Passenger Recommendations

We face two main challenges in passenger transportation:

1. Keeping our communities commercially competitive
2. Meeting the needs of an aging population

The State of Michigan is a peninsula. That's no surprise to any of us, but we have to keep that fundamental fact of geography in mind as we work on our future transportation plans. The importance of that fact is that it means that for ground transportation, all of Michigan is on the end of a branch line. That means that keeping Michigan cities commercially competitive becomes increasingly difficult as both freight and passenger services concentrate on more densely used routes on major national corridors.

Over the last thirty years, passenger air service has almost completely disappeared from a line north of Saginaw-Muskegon. In the same period, rail freight in the same area has been drastically reduced, rail passenger service has disappeared entirely and bus service is hanging on by its fingernails.

Over the same period, additional challenges have arisen in the growth of communities along the Standish-Alpena "Sunrise Shore" and in the northwest portion of the Lower Peninsula. These communities are geared toward retirees, and their transportation options are limited. Their mobility needs must be addressed if these communities are to continue to grow.

The State's mobility needs fall into two general areas: intercity and local. Both of these areas have common issues, which need addressing:

- Comfort/Convenience
- Interconnectivity
- Flexibility
- Funding

As our population ages, travel comfort becomes an issue. Driving becomes tiring and uncomfortable at shorter and shorter distances. Rail and bus offer solutions to this, but they must be scheduled often enough to be usable. One service per day in each direction means that travelers must adjust their schedule to that of the carrier. This is not the way to build ridership.

Using additional bus schedules to supplement rail schedules using common ticketing works. We have seen it work in the Flint-Chicago corridor where Indian Trails buses provided additional travel options to the Amtrak service on that line.

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The key is making the service convenient for the user. One-ticket travel eliminates a lot of inconvenience, and coordinating schedules so that transfer times are held to a minimum also improves passenger acceptance.

We believe that making Amtrak/Greyhound tickets interchangeable between Grand Rapids and Chicago would benefit both carriers. This would offer a morning Greyhound departure from Chicago for a Pere Marquette passenger who needs an early return to cities on the Pere Marquette route.

MDOT should also be more aggressive in generating ridership. Currently, MDOT limits itself to coordinating bus-rail through ticketing. MDOT works only with line-haul bus carriers such as Greyhound and Indian Trails. These buses require a substantial ridership for the through ticketing to be cost-effective. A low-cost and effective way of building ridership would be for MDOT to contract with limo services, who have a much lower cost base and who can make a profit on a fraction of the traffic that the major bus lines need. These limo services should be used to provide seven day per week round trip connections to the Port Huron-Chicago train from Saginaw to Flint, and from Mt. Pleasant to East Lansing.

Other connecting routes should also be considered, such as an East Lansing-Grand Rapids limo, and a limo from Big Rapids (Ferris State University) to Grand Rapids. Kalamazoo/Battle Creek-Elkhart limo connections to the Lakeshore Limited should also be tried. Some of these connections may not work; but they are inexpensive enough to try as one-year experiments. Every dollar generated above the cost of the limo is one dollar less of required subsidy.

We can do much better than just coordinated schedules and through ticketing, however. Several years ago, I was in the Netherlands. In the Rotterdam station there was a kiosk that offered numerous tour packages. Each tour had a number, which gave a description told what was included. By paying the requested amount and pushing that number, a ticket came out. That ticket covered my rail round trip rail fare to Amsterdam, the tram ride to and from the Museum, admission to the museum, plus a sandwich and a soft drink in the museum cafeteria. THAT'S convenience.

MDOT must insist on more control over marketing Michigan trains. In its 30+ years of existence, Amtrak has shown that it is utterly clueless about local markets, and its off-and-on ad campaigns have been disjointed, unfocused and ineffective. MDOT should ask Amtrak for a reduction in its subsidy, provided MDOT use the same amount of money to do its own local advertising for the state-supported trains.

Sadly, Amtrak has no package vacations for Detroit, even though Amtrak service is ideal for such a package. The Detroit Station is only two blocks from a major hotel (the St. Regis) and live theatre (the Fisher); several major museums (Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit Historical Museum, African-American Museum of History, and the Detroit Science Center) are close by. It should not be a problem to put together a theatre/museum package tour for a weekend in Detroit and promote tourism into the area. A similar package could be put together for Dearborn with Greenfield Village/Henry Ford Museum as the main attractions.

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Interconnectivity is a related issue that needs to be addressed. MDOT needs to sit down with Amtrak and the on-line transit systems and work out a joint ticketing arrangement so that a traveler only needs to buy one ticket to travel in Michigan. The attractiveness of intercity rail travel would be greatly enhanced if the traveler had the option of buying a "transit supplement" to their ticket which would allow them to get off the train in Detroit and hop on a local bus without having to fumble for bus fare.

MDOT should focus more on opportunities. The Holland train station is right at the gate to Windmill Park, the destination of the bulk of the visitors to the Holland Tulip Festival. Our organization has urged that M-DOT reverse the schedule of the Chicago-Grand Rapids-Pere Marquette during the Tulip Festival, and to cover the regular schedule with a bus. The revenue that could be obtained by serving the Tulip Festival patrons would result in a substantial reduction of the state's subsidy of that train.

There seems to be general agreement that southeast Michigan needs some sort of regional transit system. The creation of DARTA does not solve the problem. DARTA requires local communities to "opt-in" rather than the "opt-out" format that was vetoed by Governor Engler. The end result is that DARTA has a much higher hurdle to get over in order to establish a regional system.

One factor about transit that is usually ignored by transit planners is that a good transit system boosts property values and in turn, property tax collections. The reason is simple: transit concentrates passengers at boarding points; this makes areas around boarding points attractive for residences and businesses. The higher the level of transit, the greater this effect becomes. Bus service provides the least concentration; light rail more, commuter rail still more and subway the greatest amount of concentration. A person flying over Toronto can tell where the subway stops are located by the clusters of high-rise office and apartment towers.

Funding for non-highway transportation is a chronic problem. The state constitution limits non-highway spending to no more than 10 of Highway Trust Fund revenues. This restriction is further complicated by another provision that prohibits local sales taxes. Thus even though the state is a national leader in its support of transportation, overall (state and local) funding for non-highway transportation is among the lowest in the nation. Local units of government have two options for funding transit: property tax millages and excise taxes- both of which are difficult to enact.

The only workable solution is for a statewide tax that would not be captured by the Highway Trust Fund. This would allow 100 of the revenues to be dedicated to non-highway transportation. Such a tax would have to be broad-based enough that it would raise sufficient revenue without being an intolerable burden on taxpayers.

The other, bigger, problem with any such tax may be how to divide the revenues. In 1978, a gas tax increase was voted but competing interest could not agree on how the money should be divided. Chaos was avoided only because the late Rep. Bill Ryan was able to put together an agreement among various public transportation interests that is still the basis for the current distributions from the Comprehensive Transportation Fund.

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Planners need to recommend both a funding source and a funding formula as part of their recommendations. Their recommendations should then be reviewed for comment by all of the various transportation interests. We know that all of them will want more money, but this will help point out any gross disparities in the distribution formula. Careful planning and staff work on these issues in advance can forestall months of bickering among various interest groups later.

MDOT also needs to address the issue of freight/passenger train interference. Late trains are the number one complaint of passengers. Freight interference is one of the leading causes of late trains. Freight carriers have been under tremendous pressure to reduce costs, and have "rationalized" their trackage to the point that there is little flexibility. The freight carriers must be able to carry out their business and also have the capability to grow their business. This does not necessarily mean that freight and passenger service are incompatible. MDOT needs to sit down with freight and passenger representatives and identify a series of projects that will minimize freight/passenger interference while giving freight carriers the additional capacity and flexibility they need for their operations.

Finally, MDOT needs to recognize the importance of establishing a program of grade crossing separations. Currently, separation projects are done in an uncoordinated manner. The primary purpose of grade separations is to eliminate motor vehicle/train collisions. However, a significant secondary benefit can accrue if these projects are done in a coordinated manner.

The U. S. Secretary of transportation has designated the Detroit-Chicago route as a future high-speed rail corridor. If MDOT were to concentrate separation projects along the Detroit-Chicago Amtrak route, it would not only eliminate collisions, but it would also make significant progress in turning this route into a high-speed rail line and be in a position to attract more federal dollars into the state to further develop the route. Current MDOT policy ranks grade crossings as to the hazard of a collision occurring. This prioritizes projects on the likely damage to the vehicles involved. We feel the focus should be on the hazard to the number of people exposed to a crossing accident. We have developed a grade crossing hazard index formula for Michigan Department of Transportation that can accomplish this, and it is attached to this statement.

Q & A

Q: Senate rejected the recommendations. Senate recommended \$1.4 billion. In the house they recommended the Bush Administration. They will support no cutbacks in service. Have corridors been identified that would benefit from grade separation?

A: Yes, 9 corridors: Detroit to Chicago, Chicago St. Louis, Chicago to Los Angeles, Chicago to Cincinnati, and several others I cannot quite remember at this moment..

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Q: The seamless connection requires information. Do you have examples of where this been done well?

A: There are a number of examples of where it is working on physical facility. Port authority in New York City and the rail and intercity bus come together. And as small as San Marcus, Texas and all modes come to one facility. But there is no one good ITS (Intelligent Transportation) example. No where do we give a person the ability to plan trip on all modes and use one site to schedule them all. None in the United States and that includes public and private providers.

Q: MDOT needs to address freight passenger interference. Currently they are working on this, and so how do you see this helping? And do you feel this is a drain on the system, that is, that doesn't use rail?

A: Detroit inter-modal freight terminal has serious problems. One of the entrance and exit to the terminal will negatively impact Amtrack performance. Does it discourage travel? Yes. Late trains discourage travel. It is a significant issue. People really like service that leaves exactly when it is supposed to and arrives when it is supposed to. It doesn't just go to freight interference. On trains from Chicago to Port Huron to Toronto, for example, the customs checks have been stepped up and in 45 minutes were allowed to go thru customs. It now routinely takes over 2 hours and this has affected rider ship drastically. We support the expansion of rail service, but due to this we have asked MDOT to cut the train off at Port Huron just so we won't lose so many customers. 911 has also caused Chicago ridership to increase drastically because of air security hassles.
